

Working to Simultaneously Reduce Emissions and Job Losses

On June

26, the House approved a sweeping and controversial bill to address global warming and climate change by enacting a national energy tax. Although I've only been in Congress six months, H.R. 2454 is the worst bill that has come to the Floor yet. On the campaign trail in 2008, then-Senator Obama claimed, "electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket" under his plan to deal with global warming and he wholeheartedly endorsed this bill last week, which was championed in the House by Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

H.R.

2454 defies logic that at a time of economic recession, we would impose a regressive national energy tax that many have predicted will result in a net job loss. Supporters of this legislation only want to talk about the so-called "green" jobs that will be created; however, they are conveniently ignoring many studies which indicate that for every one of these new jobs, two jobs are eliminated.

Climate

change is a serious problem that necessitates serious solutions, but cap-and-tax is a vicious assault on Tennessee's working families who are already struggling to put food on the table and keep the lights on. Studies show this bill could devastate states like Tennessee who use a large percentage of coal to create their energy. Worse, it refuses to count one of the few energy sources that produce no greenhouse gases: nuclear energy. This will specifically hurt the Tennessee Valley Authority, which derives 30 percent of its energy from its nuclear plants.

Politics

and policy aside, the process used to craft this bill was certainly not Congress' finest moment in the history. Out of 200 amendments submitted to the House Rules Committee, the Democratic Majority allowed only one for debate on the House floor. I offered an amendment that would have at least required China and India to adopt the same standards as the United States, but I was denied a vote. Furthermore, the bill was crafted in such a way that some states will pay less and some states will pay more. When you look at the states that are predicted to have the largest increase in their energy costs, let's put it this way: the bill's sponsors — many of whom reside from California — have taken care of themselves.

The bill received widespread criticism from the agriculture and business communities, but their concerns were ignored. The American Farm Bureau strongly opposes H.R. 2454 and urged all members to vote "No" on final passage. They added that Congress is on the threshold of debating a program that will unquestionably impose enormous costs on the American economy, including agriculture. Rural America and its constituents may mean nothing to Nancy Pelosi and Henry Waxman, who live in San Francisco and Hollywood, respectively, but as a Member of the Agriculture Committee and representative for East Tennessee, those folks in the countryside mean a great deal to me.

If the Democratic Majority were truly interested in passing legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, they could have come together with Republicans and created a tax credit for businesses that reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. I think we've proven time and again that businesses that are incentivized to undertake certain behaviors do so, but businesses that are punished tend to shed jobs or shut their doors.

Without international participation, jobs and emissions will simply shift overseas to countries that require few, if any, environmental protections, harming the global environment as well as the U.S. economy. Now, more than ever, everyone must work together and protect rural America by ensuring this bill does not become law and cause food, electricity and fuel prices to spike. The bill still must be considered in the Senate, where I hope common sense will prevail and the bill will be defeated. If that happens, I stand ready to work together to come up with a logical alternative that reduces these emissions while growing, rather than shrinking, our economy. I ask you to stand with me against this bad bill because we can't afford to lose our manufacturing base.

Please feel free to contact my office if we can be of assistance to you or your family. You can contact my office by mail, email or phone.